

# DOWN AROUND THE RIVER AND OTHER POEMS

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JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

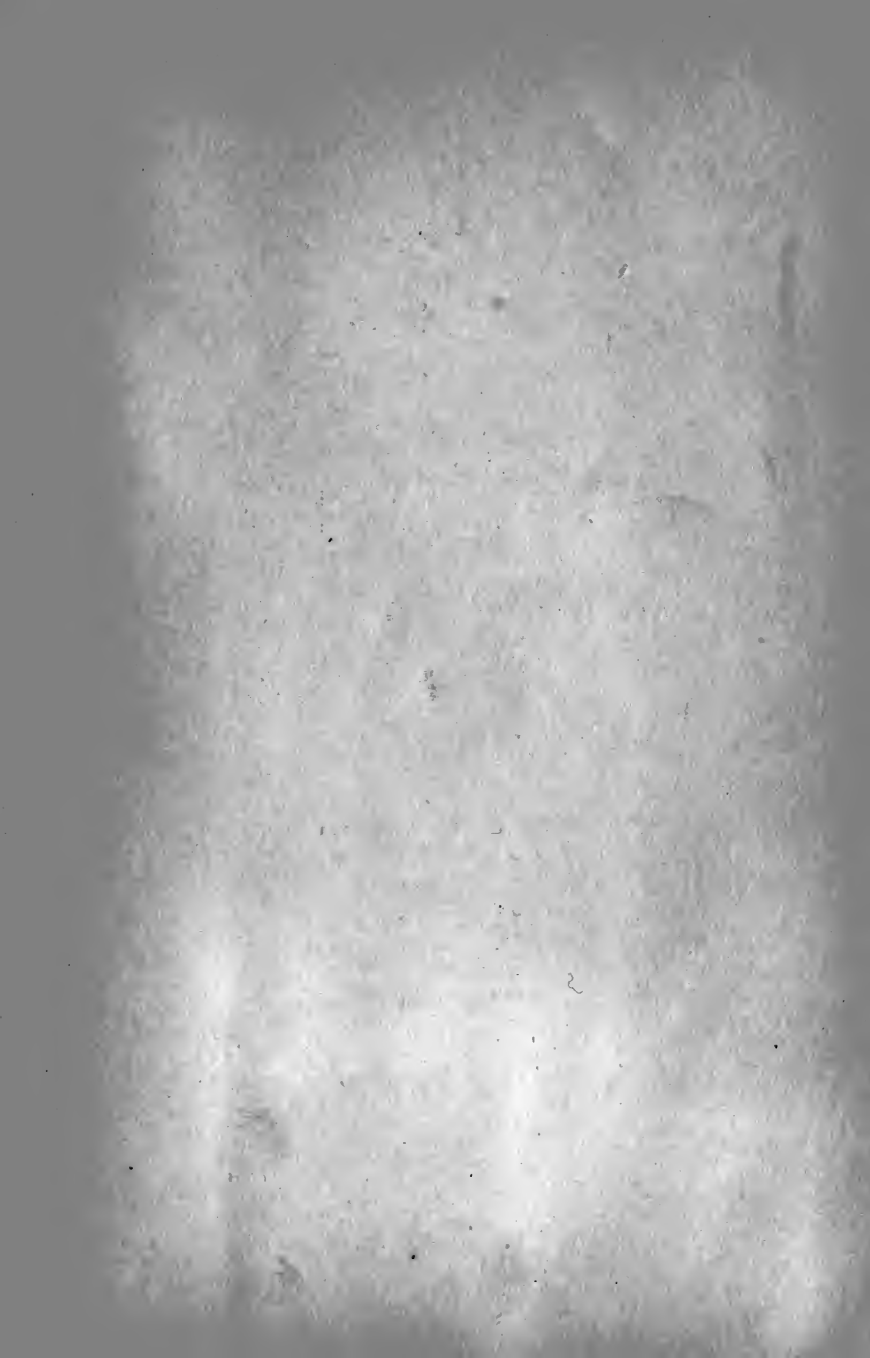


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# DOWN AROUND THE RIVER

AND OTHER POEMS

BY  
JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY  
"

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WILL VAWTER



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## DOWN AROUND THE RIVER

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NOON-TIME an' June-time, down around the  
river!

Have to furse with 'Lizey Ann—but lawzy! I fergive  
her!

Drives me off the place, an' says 'at all 'at she's a-wish-  
in',

Land o' gracious! time'll come I'll git enough o' fishin'!  
Little Dave, a-choppin' wood, never 'pears to notice;  
Don't know where she's hid his hat, er keerin' where  
his coat is,—

Specalatin', more'n like, he hain't a-goin' to mind me,  
An' guessin' where, say twelve o'clock, a feller'd likely  
find me!

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DOWN AROUND THE RIVER

---

Noon-time an' June-time, down around the river!  
Clean out o' sight o' home, an' skulkin' under kivver  
Of the sycamores, jack-oaks, an' swamp-ash an' el-  
lum—

Idies all so jumbled up, you kin hardly tell 'em!—  
*Tired*, you know, but *lovin'* it, an' smilin' jes' to think  
'at

Any *sweeter* tiredness you'd fairly want to *drink* it!  
Tired o' fishin'—tired o' fun—line out slack an'  
slacker—

All you want in all the world's a little more tobacker!

Hungry, but *a-hidin'* it, er jes' a-not a-keerin' :—  
King-fisher gittin' up an' skootin' out o' hearin';  
Snipes on the t'other side, where the County Ditch is,  
Wadin' up an' down the aidge like they'd rolled their  
britches!

Old turkle on the root kindo'-sorto' drappin'  
Intoo th' worter like he don't know how it happen!  
Worter, shade an' all so mixed, don't know which  
you'd orter

Say: th' *worter* in the shadder—*shadder* in the *worter*!

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DOWN AROUND THE RIVER

---

Somebody hollerin'—'way around the bend in  
Upper Fork—where yer eye kin jes' ketch the endin'  
Of the shiney wedge o' wake some muss-rat's a-makin'  
With that pesky nose o' his! Then a sniff o' bacon,  
Corn-bred an' 'dock-greens—an' little Dave a-shinnin'  
'Crost the rocks an' mussel-shells, a-limpin' an' a-grin-  
nin',

With yer dinner fer ye, an' a blessin' from the giver.  
Noon-time an' June-time, down around the river!





## ME AND MARY

**A**LL my feelin's in the Spring  
Gits so blame contrary,  
I can't think of anything  
Only me and Mary!  
"Me and Mary!" all the time,  
"Me and Mary!" like a rhyme,  
Keeps a-dingin' on till I'm  
Sick o' "Me and Mary!"



---

ME AND MARY

---

“Me and Mary! Ef us two  
Only was together—  
Playin’ like we used to do  
In the Aprile weather!”  
All the night and all the day  
I keep wishin’ thataway  
Till I’m gittin’ old and gray  
Jes on “Me and Mary!”

Muddy yit along the pike  
Sence the Winter’s freezin’,  
And the orchard’s back’ard-like  
Bloomin’ out this season;  
Only heerd one bluebird yit—  
Nary robin ner tomtit;  
What’s the how and why of it?  
’Spect it’s “Me and Mary!”

Me and Mary liked the birds—  
That is, *Mary* sorto’  
Liked ’em first, and afterwards,  
W’y, I thought *I’d* ort’o.  
And them birds—ef Mary stood  
Right here with me, like she should—  
They’d be singin’, them birds would,  
All fer me and Mary.



Birds er not, I'm hopin' some  
I can git to plowin'!  
Ef the sun'll only come,  
And the Lord allowin',  
Guess to-morry I'll turn in  
And git down to work ag'in;  
This here loaferin' won't win,  
Not fer me and Mary!

Fer a man that loves, like me,  
And's afeard to name it,  
Till some other feller, he  
Gits the girl—dad-shame-it!  
Wet er dry, er clouds er sun—  
Winter gone er jes begun—  
Outdoor work fer me er none,  
No more "Me and Mary!"





### A GLIMPSE OF PAN

---

I CAUGHT but a glimpse of him. Summer was here,  
And I strayed from the town and its dust and heat  
And walked in a wood, while the noon was near,  
Where the shadows were cool, and the atmosphere  
Was misty with fragrances stirred by my feet  
From surges of blossoms that billowed sheer  
O'er the grasses, green and sweet.

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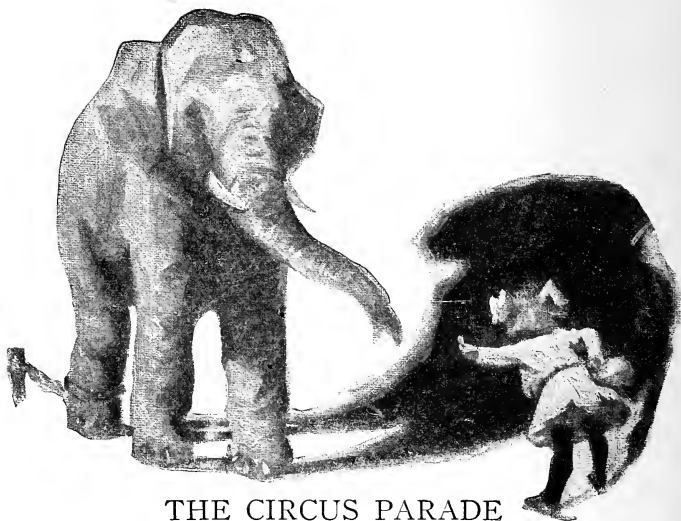
A GLIMPSE OF PAN

---

And I peered through a vista of leaning trees,  
Tressed with long tangles of vines that swept  
To the face of a river, that answered these  
With vines in the wave like the vines in the breeze,  
Till the yearning lips of the ripples crept  
And kissed them, with quavering ecstasies,  
And gurgled and laughed and wept.

And there, like a dream in a swoon, I swear  
I saw Pan lying,—his limbs in the dew  
And the shade, and his face in the dazzle and glare  
Of the glad sunshine; while everywhere,  
Over, across, and around him blew  
Filmy dragonflies hither and there,  
And little white butterflies, two and two,  
In eddies of odorous air.



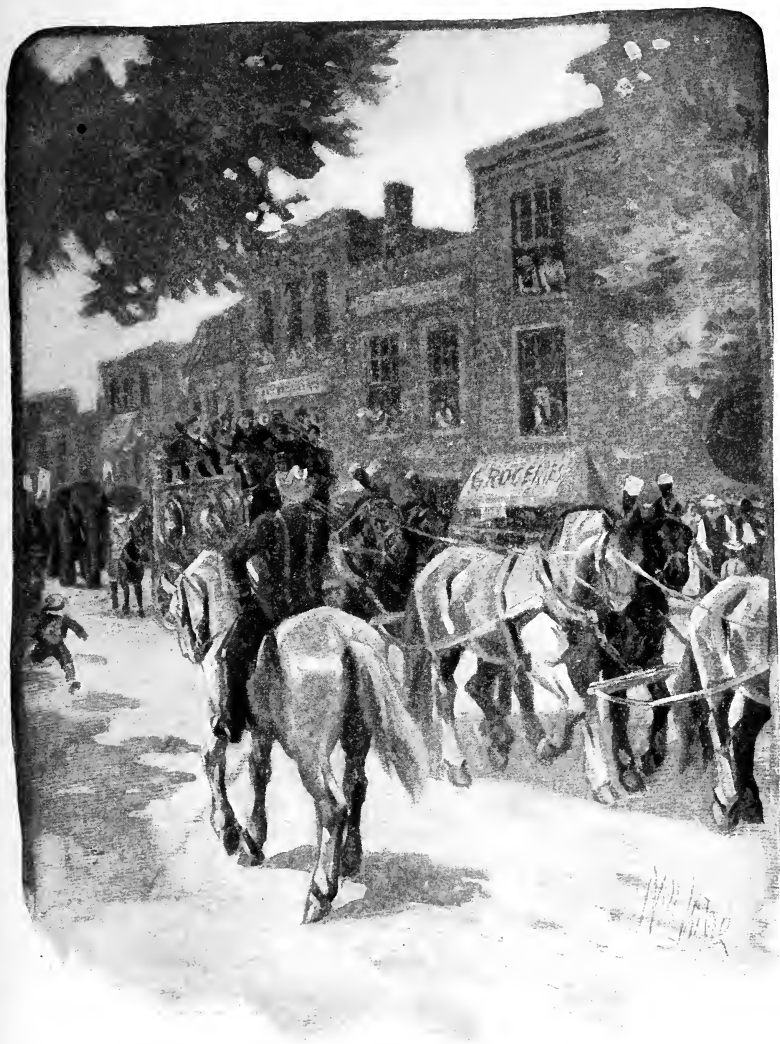


## THE CIRCUS PARADE

---

THE Circus!—The Circus!—The throb of the drums,  
And the blare of the horns, as the Band-wagon comes;  
The clash and the clang of the cymbals that beat,  
As the glittering pageant winds down the long street!

In the Circus parade there is glory clean down  
From the first spangled horse to the mule of the Clown,  
With the gleam and the glint and the glamour and glare  
Of the days of enchantment all glimmering there!



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## THE CIRCUS PARADE

---

And there are the banners of silvery fold  
Caressing the winds with their fringes of gold,  
And their high-lifted standards, with spear-tips aglow,  
And the helmeted knights that go riding below.

There's the Chariot, wrought of some marvelous shell  
The Sea gave to Neptune, first washing it well  
With its fabulous waters of gold, till it gleams  
Like the galleon rare of an Argonaut's dreams.

And the Elephant, too, (with his undulant stride  
That rocks the high throne of a king in his pride),  
That in jungles of India shook from his flanks  
The tigers that leapt from the Jujubee-banks.

Here's the long, ever-changing, mysterious line  
Of the Cages, with hints of their glories divine  
From the barred little windows, cut high in the rear,  
Where the close-hidden animals' noses appear.

Here's the Pyramid-car, with its splendor and flash,  
And the Goddess on high, in a hot-scarlet sash  
And a pen-wiper skirt!—O, the rarest of sights  
Is this "Queen of the Air" in cerulean tights!

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## THE CIRCUS PARADE

---

Then the far-away clash of the cymbals, and then  
The swoon of the tune ere it wakens again  
With the capering tones of the gallant cornet  
That go dancing away in a mad minuet.

The Circus!—The Circus!—The throb of the drums,  
And the blare of the horns, as the Band-wagon comes;  
The clash and the clang of the cymbals that beat,  
As the glittering pageant winds down the long street.





## THE MUSKINGUM VALLEY

---

**T**HE Muskingum Valley!—How longin' the gaze  
A feller throws back on its long summer-days,  
When the smiles of its blossoms and *my* smiles wuz  
one-

And-the-same, from the rise to the set o' the sun:  
Wher' the hills sloped as soft as the dawn down to  
noon,

And the river run by like an old fiddle-tune,  
And the hours glided past as the bubbles 'ud glide,  
All so loaferin'-like, 'long the path o' the tide.

In the Muskingum Valley—it 'peared like the skies  
Looked lovin' on me as my own mother's eyes,  
While the laughin'-sad song of the stream seemed to be  
Like a lullaby angels was wastin' on me—





---

THE MUSKINGUM VALLEY

---

Tel, swimmin' the air, like the gossamer's thread,  
'Twixt the blue underneath and the blue overhead,  
My thoughts went a-stray in that so-to-speak realm  
Wher' Sleep bared her breast as a piller fer them.

In the Muskingum Valley, though far, far a-way,  
I know that the winter is bleak there to-day—  
No bloom ner perfume on the brambles er trees—  
Wher' the buds used to bloom, now the icicles freeze.—  
That the grass is all hid 'long the side of the road  
Wher' the deep snow has drifted and shifted and  
blowed—

And I feel in my life the same changes is there,—  
The frost in my heart, and the snow in my hair.

But, Muskingum Valley! my memory sees  
Not the white on the ground, but the green in the  
trees—

Not the froze'-over gorge, but the current, as clear  
And warm as the drop that has jes trickled here;  
Not the choked-up ravine, and the hills topped with  
snow,

But the grass and the blossoms I knowed long ago  
When my little bare feet wundered down wher' the  
stream

In the Muskingum Valley flowed on like a dream.



### THE TREE-TOAD

---

“’SCUR’OUS-LIKE,” said the tree-toad,  
“I’ve twittered fer rain all day;  
And I got up soon,  
And hollered tel noon—  
But the sun, hit blazed away,  
Tel I jest clumb down in a crawfish-hole,  
Weary at hart, and sick at soul!

“Dozed away ter an hour,  
And I tackled the thing agin:  
And I sung, and sung,  
Tel I knowed my lung  
Was jest about give in;  
And *then*, thinks I, ef hit don’t rain *now*,  
They’s nothin’ in singin’, anyhow!

---

THE TREE-TOAD

---

“Onc’t in a while some farmer  
Would come a-drivin’ past;  
And he’d hear my cry,  
And stop and sigh—  
Tel I jest laid back, at last,  
And I hollered rain tel I thought my th’oat  
Would bust wide open at ever’ note!

“But I *fetch*ed her!—O, I *fetch*ed her—  
’Cause a little while ago,  
As I kindo’ set,  
With one eye shet,  
And a-singin’ soft and low,  
A voice drapped down on my fevered brain,  
A-sayin’,—‘*Ef you’ll jest hush I’ll rain!*’ ”





## IN SWIMMING-TIME

---

CLOUDS above, as white as wool,  
Drifting over skies as blue  
As the eyes of beautiful  
Children when they smile at you :  
Groves of maple, elm and beech,  
With the sunshine sifted through  
Branches, mingling each with each,  
Dim with shade and bright with dew.

Stripling trees, and poplars hoar,  
Hickory and sycamore,  
And the drowsy dogwood, bowed  
Where the ripples laugh aloud,  
And the crooning creek is stirred  
To a gaiety that now  
Mates the warble of the bird,  
Teetering on the hazel-bough.

---

IN SWIMMING-TIME

---

Grasses long and fine and fair  
As your schoolboy-sweetheart's hair  
Backward stroked and twirled and twined  
By the fingers of the wind:  
Vines and mosses interlinked  
    Down dark aisles and deep ravines,  
Where the stream runs, willow-brinked,  
    Round a bend where some one leans,  
Faint, and vague, and indistinct  
    As the like-reflected thing  
    In the current shimmering.

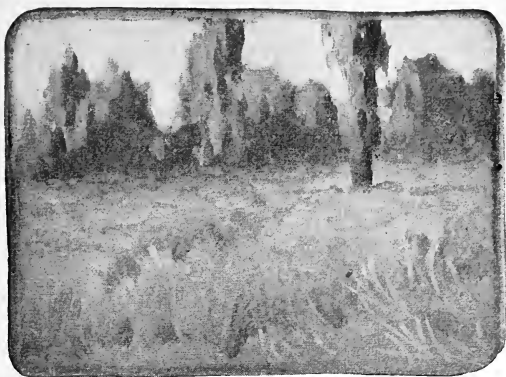
Childish voices, further on,  
Where the truant stream has gone,  
Vex the echoes of the wood  
Till no word is understood—  
Save that we are well aware  
Happiness is hiding there:—  
There, in leafy coverts, nude  
    Little bodies poise and leap,  
Spattering the solitude  
And the silence, everywhere—  
    Mimic monsters of the deep!—



Wallowing in sandy shoals—  
Plunging headlong out of sight,  
And, with spurtings of delight,  
Clutching hands, and slippery soles,  
Climbing up the treacherous steep,  
Over which the spring-board spurns  
Each again as he returns!  
Ah! the glorious carnival!  
Purple lips—and chattering teeth—  
Eyes that burn—But, in beneath,  
Every care beyond recall—  
Every task forgotten quite—  
And again in dreams at night,  
Dropping, drifting through it all!







## JUNE

---

O QUEENLY month of indolent repose!  
I drink thy breath in sips of rare perfume,  
As in thy downy lap of clover-bloom  
I nestle like a drowsy child and doze  
The lazy hours away. The zephyr throws  
The shifting shuttle of the Summer's loom  
And weaves a damask-work of gleam and gloom  
Before thy listless feet. The lily blows  
A bugle-call of fragrance o'er the glade;  
And, wheeling into ranks, with plume and  
spear,  
Thy harvest-armies gather on parade;  
While, faint and far away, yet pure and clear,  
A voice calls out of alien lands of shade:—  
All hail the Peerless Goddess of the Year!









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